

CHRIST JESUS: THE WAY

JOHN 14.6

2011 marks a turning point in the life of our church. Behind us there is conflict and doubts and uncertainty. The way ahead of us I pray will not be one of conflict and doubt, but even in the presence of strong faith there is always uncertainty.

We cannot see what God has in store for us, but we venture forth into this new year with a confidence that God is sovereign and that He will accomplish His mission of seeing the gospel message carried to the ends of the earth so that all people groups will have a chance to hear the good news of Jesus Christ.

In effect, 2011 is a year of starting over. It is the first year of a new decade. It is a year of new beginnings, and whatever happens from this point forward will be determined by our faithfulness to God's call to be obedient to the Great Commission and to remain faithful to the fellowship of our church.

We even have a new name – True Life Baptist Church.

That new name will not make us successful. It will not make us into anything that we are not and will not free us from the obligation we have to work diligently and in cooperation with one another.

Yet there is much in this new name to inspire us to understanding and to renew our commitment to Christ and to each other.

John 14:6 Jesus said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

I hope to expound on this verse and the way our new name relates to it as we go through the next few weeks, but for now, let's just talk about it in general terms for a minute or two.

One of the first things that is obvious about the name True Life Church are the initials – TLC.

Of course, we automatically think “tender loving care,” and that is good because that is what Christ has demonstrated towards us

and what He commands us to demonstrate toward one another and toward the world – including our enemies.

But TLC can stand for many different things:

- **The Living Christ or Loving Christ.**

We are founded in Christ. We all know that there is no other way that we can be reconciled to the Father except through Christ. Everything begins with making this connection to God through the blood, the death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Acts 4:12 ...there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

Jesus said, **“I am the way.”** We will talk more about what He meant by that in a few moments.

- **The Loving Community or Learning Community.**

Jesus said, **“I am the truth.”** If we would know God and the truth about God, we must learn it from Christ. Jesus said, “If you have seen me you have seen the Father.” He is the Word of God – He is Immanuel – God in the flesh come to reveal to us the truth about the Father.

Matt. 11:27 ...no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

William Willimon

...the first task of the church is *formation* rather than *education* – *not* to bring out, but to bring to. The task of Christian educators is not to develop an individual's potential ...but rather to induct us into the faith community, to give us the skills, insights, words, stories and rituals that we need to live this faith in a world that neither knows nor follows the One who is truth.

We are formed in community. We learn about God within the community of believers. God designed the church for the distinct purpose of providing a place for us to support one another, to

learn from one another, and in cooperation with one another to take on the task of the Great Commission.

- **The Lasting or Life-long Commitment.**

Those who believe in Christ and who profess Him as Lord are given eternal life – not just a life that begins when we enter into the spiritual world following our death, but the abundant kind of life that can be found only in Him.

Jesus said, *“I am the life.”* And He gives us His life so that we might give it away to others. We are called to be ambassadors for Christ and that calling lasts a life time. We are to remain focused on the mission.

The Living Christ	Founded in Christ	The Way
The Loving Community	Formed in Community	The Truth
The Lasting Commitment	Focused on the Mission	The Life

I want us to look at each of these parts – the way, the truth, and the life – as they relate to Christ and to us as a church. And this morning we will start with “the way.”

We live in a very pluralistic society. In other words, our world today offers multiple ways to arrive at the same or similar destination – whether it is referred to as God, or heaven, or Nirvana.

Our culture demands that we demonstrate tolerance toward every religion because every religion is true for those who believe in it, and no person has the right to demean another person’s religious beliefs.

Therefore, any claim to the uniqueness of Christ as the only way to God is condemned as intolerant and bigoted and, in some minds, equivalent to hate speech.

Furthermore, this idea is not restricted to secular worldviews, but is often challenged even in Christian circles.

Many of you have joined in the challenge to pray for the world this year. As a result, you are familiar with *Operation World* which

catalogues the people groups and nations of the world and presents a prayer plan for praying through the year.

In the book, the authors point out that one of the key issues facing the church today is...

...maintaining a clear witness to the uniqueness of Christ in the midst of growing religious pluralism and post-modernity. Even among Christians, a creeping universalism can be observed as gaining ground. The convictions of believers regarding the uniqueness of Jesus, and His claim to be the only way to the Father, are being challenged from within and without the Church.

During a conference on various religious subjects affecting the church, a person attending asked his Christian companions their views on the uniqueness of Jesus.

Their response was that of course Jesus is unique. But, they continued, so are the leaders of the other world religions...The uniqueness of Jesus was no different from that of any other important religious figure.

This person then described *“a group of Christian students who were happy to maintain that Jesus was unique, but also quick to affirm that so is every human being, since all are made in the image of God.”*

According to a 2008 national survey conducted by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 52 percent of all American Christians believe that non-Christian faiths can lead to eternal life.

Obviously, if Christians cannot agree that Jesus is unique and is the only way that man can find salvation and reconciliation with the Father, then there is no hope for the rest of mankind. We have to get it right, and we have to stand firm on the teachings of Scripture.

It is not a complicated subject. One does not require a seminary degree to understand that Jesus and the Father are one – that if any person ever comes to know the Father it will be because of the work and the grace of Jesus Christ who paid the debt of sin that we might have access to the Father.

The Scriptures are very clear about this. Let's take time this morning to review what "thus saith the Lord" concerning the uniqueness of Christ and His role as the way to the Father.

Prov. 14:12 *There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.*

Jer. 10:23 *I know, O LORD, that the way of man is not in himself, that it is not in man who walks to direct his steps.*

Psalms 139:24 *And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!*

Often times the way of God is not the way that is easiest way and it is not even the way that seems to make the most sense to us.

Ex. 13:17 *When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near. For God said, "Lest the people change their minds when they see war and return to Egypt." 18 But God led the people around by the way of the wilderness toward the Red Sea. And the people of Israel went up out of the land of Egypt equipped for battle.*

It was a hard journey filled with hardships but God sent an angel before the people to guard them on the way (Ex. 23:20). Even with all of this, the Bible says...

Num. 21:4 *...the people became impatient on the way. 5 And the people spoke against God and against Moses...*

Throughout His ministry, Jesus taught His disciples that He and the Father were one and that to know Jesus was the same as knowing the Father.

John 1:18 *No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.*

Some of your Bibles will translate this to say "the only begotten Son, who is at the Father's side..." But the oldest Greek manuscripts record "God only begotten."

Matt. 11:27 *...no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.*

Jesus even warned His disciples that following Him was not going to be easy.

Matt. 7:13 *Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. 14 For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.*

John 10:9 *I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.*

There are other scriptures that confirm this idea that Jesus is the only way to the Father – the only way to salvation – the only assurance of heaven.

Acts 4:12 *...there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.*

Rom. 5:2 *Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand...*

Eph. 2:18 *For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.*

Heb. 7:24 *...He (Jesus) holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues forever. 25 Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.*

Heb. 10:19 *...we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, 20 by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh...*

1 Pet. 1:21 *Through him (Christ) you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God. (NIV)*

Even though the world rejects the uniqueness of Christ and even though TV preachers like Kenneth Copeland and the Word-Faith movement do not believe that Jesus is the only begotten Son of the Father, I do.

And the Bible makes this truth painfully clear.

Even the one single verse that is the most well-known verse of the Bible speaks to the fact that Jesus is the only way.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Simply said, Jesus is the Way.

John Phillips, Commentary on John

A pioneer missionary in Africa tells how he was taking the gospel to a new tribe, far to the north. With his bearers, he arrived at a village, a point beyond which his porters refused to go.

The missionary appealed to the local chief. Was there someone in his village who could act as his guide to the distant northern tribe?

The chief summoned a man, tall, battle scarred, carrying a large axe. A bargain was made and the next morning the missionary set off through the bush, following his new guide.

The way became increasingly rough and the path had all but disappeared. There was an occasional mark blazed on a tree, occasionally a narrow path.

Finally the missionary called a halt. He asked the guide if he was sure he knew the way.

The man pulled himself up to his full height. "White man," he said, "you see this axe in my hand? You see these scars on my body? With this axe I blazed the trail to the tribal village to which we go. I came from there. These scars I received when I made the way. You ask me if I know the way? Before I came, there was no way. I am the way."

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory,

the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

Jesus was with the Father from eternity. He came to earth, blazing the trail that would provide a way for men to be reconciled to the Father.

John Phillips goes on to say...

The Lord Jesus came from glory. Now he was on his way back to glory, by way of the cross. Before he came, there was no way. The scars of Calvary on his body attest to the price he paid to blaze that trail for us back to God. He points to his scars and says, "I am the way." The disciples would understand it better later on. But the fact was true. They knew where he was going because he had told them. They knew the way because they knew him and he was the way.

At True Life Church, we acknowledge the fact that we are members of the kingdom of God because of our connection with the living Christ.